A READING STRATEGY: THE FINAL WORD

**PURPOSE:** Encourages various interpretations of text by allowing students to share their own viewpoints, interests, and voices with members of a small group. As students explain their interpretations, others listen closely and reflect on the ideas being shared.

**TIME:** about 30 to 60 minutes **NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN GROUP:** 4-7

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Each student has a copy of the selection and either has read the selection in advance or reads it when the group meets. Students highlight (or mark in some way—perhaps with post-it notes) significant places as they read.
2. After reading, each student selects several highlighted items to share with the group. (Allow a couple of minutes for the quiet selection process.)
3. One person begins the process by reading aloud one part that he or she chose. After the reading, that person makes *no other comment*.
4. One at a time, the others in the group comment on what the first person highlighted and read. (Time limit may be agreed upon.) It is okay to pass and not comment, but of course that is not encouraged. There should be no cross conversation—no discussion.
5. At the end of the round, the first person (the one who read the highlighted portion), talks about the selection, and may explain why that part was chosen. The first person to read becomes the last person in the round and gets the “**final word**.”
6. There is still no other interaction/discussion. (Or see variation #1 below.)
7. Then move to the next person to read his or her chosen highlighted portion, and the same procedure repeats. This occurs until all members of the group have shared a part they chose, and other group members have responded.

VARIATIONS:

1. After each round a general discussion can take place. (Time limit can be agreed upon.)
2. Instead of highlighting, each person chooses a few ideas from the selection and writes them down. Then taking turns as above, one person chooses one idea to read, with or without additional explanation, with others commenting in succession on what they heard. Presenter then gets final word.
3. The student reading a chosen part comments at that time about the part. Listeners in turn take 1 uninterrupted minute to reflect back on what the presenter said. Reflecting back means exploring the presenter’s interpretation, not adding one’s own interpretation. A listener might begin, “From what you said, I can see you are concerned about . . ..” The initial presenter takes 1 minute at the end to react to what was said by others during the round.
4. The group can come up with one synthesizing statement for each topic (each shared portion), or one such statement for the whole piece.

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